

D-727  
Todd Seafood  
Cambridge  
Private

c. 1930 and later

The Todd Seafood company packinghouse is large concrete block and frame facility erected during several stages beginning around 1930. Achieving its current form by the mid twentieth century, the packinghouse is erected in plain concrete block with frame walled second story sections. The multi-faceted packinghouse was built in the accretive, somewhat haphazard looking manner common to utilitarian seafood plant construction in general. The Todd Seafood building is one of three seafood packing facilities remaining on Cambridge Creek. The two other structures, the old Tubman, Mills & Company facility and the former I. L. Leonard plant, are consolidated into complex operated by the J.M. Clayton Company.

Jennings Todd and his cousin Ivy Todd bought an existing oyster shucking house, the Robbins Packing Company from Edward Robbins at the foot of Cherry Street on Cambridge Creek. At first they packed oysters and crabmeat under the Todd Company label. After the company incorporated in the early 1950s, they adopted the brand names "Maryland's Finest," "Chesapeake," and Todd's." The Todds enlarged the building in order to accommodate space for crab picking and soft-shell crab shedding. At the peak of production in the mid 1950s, the company employed 50 to 60 pickers and 30 shuckers. Ivy Todd also sold coal at the Cherry Street site as a side-line. The Todd family company remained in business until 1995.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. D-727

### 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Todd Seafood, Inc.  
other Todd and Company

### 2. Location

street and number 400 Cherry Street not for publication  
city, town Cambridge vicinity  
county Dorchester

### 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Todd Seafood Inc. c/o Michael Todd  
street and number 3 Hatsawap Road telephone 410-228-3383  
city, town Cambridge state Maryland zip code 21613

### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dorchester County Clerk of Court liber 128 folio 239  
city, town Cambridge tax map 301 tax parcel 4466 tax ID number 7-148097

### 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District  
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER  
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. Classification

#### Category

☐ district  
☒ building(s)  
☐ structure  
☐ site  
☐ object

#### Ownership

☐ public  
☒ private  
☐ both

#### Current Function

☐ agriculture ☐ landscape  
☐ commerce/trade ☐ recreation/culture  
☐ defense ☐ religion  
☐ domestic ☐ social  
☐ education ☐ transportation  
☐ funerary ☐ work in progress  
☐ government ☐ unknown  
☐ health care ☐ vacant/not in use  
☒ industry ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Number of Contributing Resources  
previously listed in the Inventory  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

Inventory No. D-727

### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Todd Seafood company packinghouse is located at 400 Cherry Street in the heart of Cambridge, Dorchester County, Maryland. The rambling two-story, concrete block and frame structure, erected in many stages, faces Cambridge Creek with a bulkheaded dock on its east boundary. The property is bordered by a shopping center and a condominium complex on the northwest and north sides. The packinghouse occupies a sloped site with portions of walls extending lower than grade. Since the facility has been closed since the mid 1990s, the structure is secured against any entry, even by its owners.

The south elevation of the packinghouse is a long asymmetrical façade of concrete block walls on the first story and metal or asphalt shingle clad second story. The medium pitched gable roofs are covered various types of corrugated metal or tin. The first floor is defined by a series of boarded over window and door openings asymmetrically arranged across the long façade, which stretches approximately one-hundred feet. The second story, clad in either corrugated metal or imitation brick asphalt shingle, is pierced by a wide variety of window or door openings including two-over-two, six-over-six sash windows, or fixed twelve- or six-pane window openings. Boarded over freight type double door entrances are located on the first and second floors. Protruding through the gable roof are several vents with metal covers.

Attached to the west end of the two-story section is a long, single-story concrete block storage wing approximately twenty-feet deep and sixty feet long. The wing is covered by a flat roof. Attached to the east end is a combination one- and two-story, concrete block and frame section oriented on a perpendicular axis to the main building. Located inside the corner of the two sections is a single-story porch area that shelters a double-door opening into the main building. The lateral east wing houses the retort as well as space for picking crabs. Built in a combination of concrete block on the first story and frame walls sheathed with imitation brick sheathing on the second story, the lateral wing is covered by a low pitched gable roof. The first floor concrete wall is pierced by a series of boarded over window openings. The first story brick wall extends beyond the two-story section to enclose a large area covered by a low pitched shed roof that extends northward from the main packinghouse. The single story concrete block wall is pierced by a series of boarded over window and door openings. On the north side of the single-story section is a metal conveyor used for the removal of crab waste. Close to the northwest corner of the single-story, shed roofed section, the building nearly disappears under grade. Defining the northwest corner of the shed roofed section is a squarish concrete block walled cooler that is covered by a low pitched shed roof as well. The cooler has an exterior door that opens onto a small poured concrete paving. Along the northwest side of the single-story, shed roofed section, the wall abuts the parking lot of the shopping center next door. A series of small rectangular window openings with board covers pierces the concrete wall, which is finished with a parapet.

The northwest side of a section of the main two-story packinghouse, which abuts the parking lot as well, is pierced by a side entrance that opens into the company office. The office is defined by a series of boarded over door and window openings along with two metal clad windows. Stretching to the west beyond the two-story section is the long single-story, concrete walled storage wing.

Due to an exceptionally secured exterior the interior was not open to inspection.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No. D-727

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Specific dates

Architect/Builder

Construction dates

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The Todd Seafood company packinghouse is a large concrete block and frame facility erected during several stages beginning around 1930. Achieving its current form by the mid twentieth century, the packinghouse is erected in plain concrete block with frame walled second story sections. The multi-faceted packinghouse was built in the accretive, somewhat haphazard looking manner common to seafood plant construction in general. The Todd Seafood building is one of three seafood packing facilities remaining on Cambridge Creek. The two other structures, the old Tubman, Mills & Co. facility and the old I. L. Leonard plant, are operated by one firm, the J. M. Clayton Company, and they are located near the mouth of the creek off Commerce Street.

### HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Meredith & Meredith Seafood was established on Fishing Bay in Dorchester County in 1920 by cousins Roland Meredith and Oswald Meredith. When Oswald died in 1946, nephews Jennings Todd and Calvert Tolley were brought into the business. Jennings Todd worked in the partnership from 1946 until 1949 when he was bought out by Armon Todd and left to establish Todd Seafood in Cambridge.<sup>1</sup>

Jennings Todd and his cousin Ivy Todd bought an existing oyster shucking house, the Robbins Packing Company, from Edward Robbins at the foot of Cherry Street on Cambridge Creek. At first, they packed oysters and crabmeat under the Todd Company label. After the company incorporated in the early 1950s, they adopted brand names "Maryland's Finest," "Chesapeake,"<sup>2</sup> and "Todd's."<sup>3</sup> The Todds extended the building to provide space for the crab picking and soft-shell crab shedding. At the peak of production in the mid 1950s, the company employed 50 to 60 pickers and 30 shuckers. Ivy Todd also sold coal at the Cherry Street site as a side-line.<sup>4</sup>

The 1960-61 oyster season was terrible with several hard freezes shutting down the Maryland oyster fishery. Ivy Todd supported an attempt by Dorchester County seafood workers to form a protective

<sup>1</sup> Interview with J. C. Tolley by Virginia Jenkins, December 14, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> "Maryland Brands," *Fishing Gazette*, October 1964, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Student paper by Morgan B. Tolley, 1993, Nabb Research Center, Salisbury University.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Michael Todd, Cambridge, Maryland, February 12, 2002.



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## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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organization. "The plight of the seafood workers was described by Leroy Jones, 46, foreman at the Todd Co. plant on Cherry Street. In his nine years experience, he said the present season is the industry's worst."<sup>5</sup> In 1962 Ivy Todd was treasurer of the Chesapeake Bay Seafood Rehabilitation Committee, formed to find new markets for seafood products and to publicize the industry.<sup>6</sup> In 1965 the company employed 146 workers (43 men and 103 women) processing oysters, crabmeat, and steamed and soft crabs.<sup>7</sup> A freezer was added in the late 1960s and the company made their own ice.

Jennings Todd died in 1969 and Ivy was in the process of buying Jennings' share in the business when he died in January, 1970. Jennings Todd's widow then purchased the business from Ivy Todd's widow, and ran it with her son Michael W. Todd for two or three years. Michael Todd had been in graduate school at the University of Maryland, but came home to help his mother. They tried producing crabcakes but this did not prove to be successful. Mrs. Jennings Todd remarried and sold her share of the business to her son in 1973, then moved to Texas to start a new crab plant, packing under the "Blue Sea" brand.<sup>8</sup>

Michael W. Todd was president of Todd Seafoods, Inc. in 1977 with Mark Sullivan as vice-president.<sup>9</sup> In 1983 the company employed 80 people processing oysters, crabmeat and steamed crabs.<sup>10</sup> The oyster shuckers were mostly black women who sang spirituals as they worked. There were a few men who shucked as well. The company stopped shucking oysters in the early 1980s.

The company processed soft crabs and crabmeat, purchasing crabs from Maryland watermen as well as importing them from Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana. Some of the Todd crabmeat was pasteurized at the near-by J. M. Clayton Company. Todd Seafood, Inc. sold to restaurants and chain stores in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. These included A & P, Food Fair, Penn Fruit, and P & C Markets in New England. They also sold their product to Phillips Crab House in Baltimore. Their products were sent as far south as Rome, Georgia, by railway express, and to customers in Iowa, Ohio, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Canada. When Railway Express stopped refrigerated service to the mid-west, it really hurt the oyster business. Todd Seafood did not own their own trucks, but contracted with independent trucking companies.

In addition to their wholesale business, Todd Seafood operated a retail, carry-out business at the rear of the property where Alvin Meekins sold steamed crabs, crabmeat, and oysters. Visiting hunters would stop by to purchase oysters to take home with them during the deer and waterfowl hunting seasons.

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<sup>5</sup> Cambridge *Daily Banner*, February 10, 1961.

<sup>6</sup> Cambridge *Banner*, July 16, 1962.

<sup>7</sup> Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1965-1966, Maryland Department of Economic Development, p. 236.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Michael Todd, Cambridge, Maryland, February 12, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1977-1978, Maryland Department of Economic and Community Development, p. 166.

<sup>10</sup> Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1983-1984, Maryland Department of Economic and Community Development, p. 296.

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The company stopped operating in 1995, although it is still an active Maryland corporation. In 1994, when they constructed a new bulkhead along the creek, some black mud was discovered. They also found the coal tar when they dug for postholes for a new fence. The substance was tested and the Maryland Department of the Environment was asked to provide assistance in getting the site added to the Environmental Protection Agency's superfund list for clean-up. As of 2002, there has been no action on this issue.<sup>11</sup> The adjacent property had been Cambridge Gas Company and was purchased by the Eastern Shore Public Service Co. of Maryland. They divested this property in 1948. It is currently owned by Connectiv.

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<sup>11</sup> Information provided by Michael and Sue Todd, Cambridge, Maryland, February 12, 2002.

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## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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**Continuation Sheet**

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Todd Seafood, Inc.  
400 Cherry Street  
Cambridge, Dorchester County, Maryland  
Chain of title

Map 301, Parcel 4466

128/239 Ivy R. Todd, Jr. & Jennings W. Todd, co-partners trading as  
Todd Company (sometimes known as Todd & Company)

to

6/12/1962 Todd Seafoods, Inc.

Lot # 1

RSM 69/114 Daniel O. Seward

to

4/9/1949 Ivy R. Todd & Jennings W. Todd

JFD 18/472 William P. Simms & Mary W. Simms

to

7/8/1926 Daniel O. Seward  
Being the same land reserved unto the said Daniel O. Seward in a deed to  
Ronie W. Parks, dated 9/21/1926, JFD 19/13

Together with the buildings and improvements thereon, 121 feet 6 inches x  
50 feet 6 inches x 116 feet x 43 feet

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**Maryland Inventory of**  
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Name Todd Seafood, Inc.  
**Continuation Sheet**

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Lot #2

RSM 69/230

Edward A. Robbins, Emerson B. Slocum, Lucille M. Pink—Robbins  
Packing Company

to

5/12/1949

Ivy R. Todd, Jr. and Jennings W. Todd  
Binding on the westward side of Cambridge Creek, 112 feet x 142 feet  
4 inches x 71 feet 8.5 inches x 115 feet 4 inches x 30 feet x 4 feet 8 inches  
x 115 feet 8 inches x 33 feet 4 inches

RSM 62/457

Charles E. Edmondson, trustee

to

5/12/1949

Edward A. Robbins, Emerson B. Slocum, Lucille M. Pink—Robbins  
Packing Company

RSM 54/539

Edward A. Robbins & Elizabeth R. Robbins

to

7/18/1945

Helen L. Robbins—mortgagor  
Personal property and chattels now located in the seafood packing house  
constructed by Edward A. Robbins upon the above described property:  
One skimmer, all oyster tubs, two electric motors, one blower, one hoist,  
toilets, sinks, one steamer, all stoves, buckets, shucking stalls and tables  
and all other personal property and equipment used by the said Edward  
A. Robbins in conducting a seafood packing business upon the property  
above described.



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Name Todd Seafood, Inc.  
Continuation Sheet

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WLR 7/453

Samuel J. Venable & Amelia Venable  
Granville H. Hales & Betty Hales  
Cambridge Female Seminary

Whereas the said parties own adjoining lands and the boundary line between the property...has been indefinite and unsettled, growing out of respective claims, of the parties hereto to the branch or meadow land, which formerly lay between the said properties, but which has been lately filled in....Venable et al. do hereby grant and convey unto the said "The Cambridge Female Seminary,"....to any and all parcel or parcels of land that lie to the North of the above described boundary line....

Lot #3

RSM 93/331

Phillips Hardware Company

to

4/20/1955

Ivy R. Todd, Jr. & Jennings W. Todd, trading as Todd Company  
3,635.9 square feet

RSM 41/328

Albanus Phillips, wife et al.

to

6/12/1940

Phillips Hardware Company

**Maryland Historical Trust**  
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**Historic Properties Form**

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Name Todd Seafood, Inc.  
**Continuation Sheet**

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Cambridge Seminary School Property  
Board of Education of Dorchester County

to

11/15/1938

Albanus Phillips & Daisy Alma Phillips

JFD 17/456

Cambridge Female Seminary—W. Laird Henry, receiver

to

11/24/1925

Board of Education of Dorchester County

FJH 6/102

Charles F. Goldsborough & Charlotte A. P. Goldsborough

to

2/28/1865

Cambridge Female Seminary

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Name Todd Seafood, Inc.  
**Continuation Sheet**

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Lot #4

PLC 125/556

Phillips Hardware Company

to

10/26/1961

Ivy R. Todd, Jr. and Jennings Todd  
Whereas the said Ivy R. Todd, Jr. and Jennings W. Todd, co-partners  
Trading as Todd Company, do hereby grant and convey, bargain and sell  
unto Todd Seafoods, Inc. its successors and assigns, all of the personal  
property, oyster packing equipment, inventory, supplies, equipment,  
merchandise and fixtures used in connection with the seafood packing  
business.....11,715.19 feet...being a part of the land known as  
"Cambridge School Property" described in a deed from Albanus  
Phillips, et al. to Phillips Hardware Company, 6/12/1940, RSM 41/328

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. D-727

Dorchester County Land Records, various volumes, Dorchester County Courthouse.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 1 acre  
Acreage of historical setting 1 acre  
Quadrangle name Cambridge, Maryland

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The metes and bounds of this property are coincidental with the current boundary of the lot.

## 11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian and Virginia Jenkins, Business Historian, CBMM		
organization	Private Consultants	date	12/12/2001
street & number	P. O. Box 5	telephone	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	state	Maryland 21871

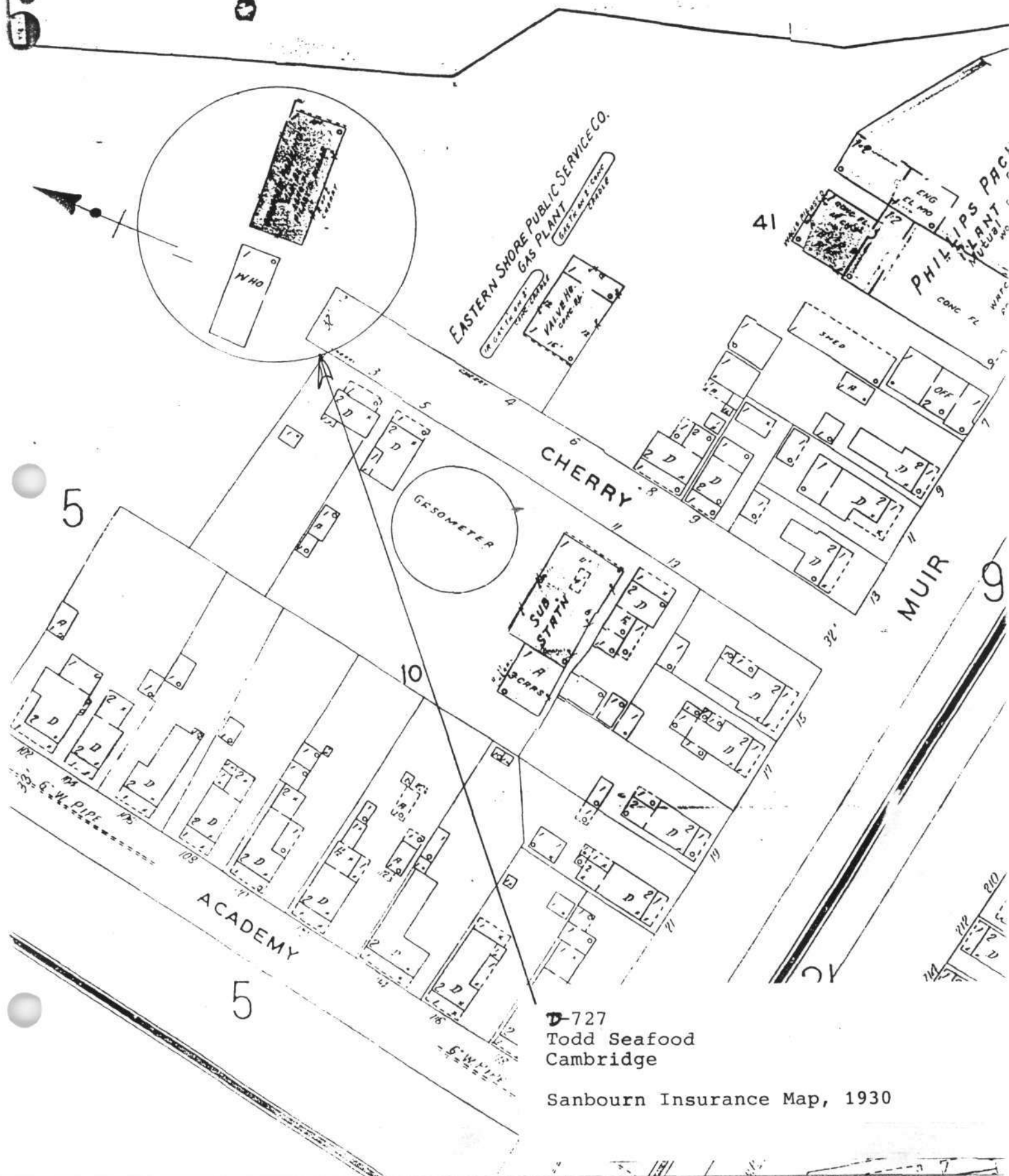
The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600

MI

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~~D~~-727  
Todd Seafood  
Cambridge

Sanbourn Insurance Map, 1930

TALBOT CO  
DORCHESTER CO

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Todd Seafood  
Cambridge, Maryland Quadrangle  
1988







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Todd SEAKOOS

CAMBRIDGE, DORCHESTER CO. MD.

NO. 1111 ELEVATION

2/2002, Paul Touant, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEH/MD HISTORICAL TRUST

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TOWN SEND

CAMBRIDGE, DORCHESTER CO., MD.

NORTH ELEVATION

2/2002, PAUL TOWNSEND, PHOTOGRAPHER

NB/M.D. HISTORICAL TRUST

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Town Square

CAMBRIDGE, DORCHESTER Co., MA.

Northwest Elevation

2/2002, Paul Touant, Pittsburg  
Neg./MA Historical Trust

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D-727

Town Square

CAMBRIDGE, Dorchester Co., MD.

North Elevation

2/2002, Paul Towart, Photographer

NEH / MD Historical Trust

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Topo Sketch

CAMPBELL, DORCHESTER C., MD.

North Elevation

2/2002, Paul Toure, PITOT & ASSOCIATES

NEL/and Historical Trust

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Town SEAROUS

CAMBRIDGE, DORCHESTER Co., MD.

SOUTHEAST ELEVATION

4/2002, PAUL TOWNET, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEZ./MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

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